

OSU Libraries Staff Focus Groups

Research & Innovative Services Report
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Executive Summary

Research and Innovative Services (RIS) conducted focus groups with the OSU Libraries faculty and staff to promote the mission of the department and to identify potential research areas. We saw the focus groups as a way to elicit input and tap the reservoir of ideas from people across the library. In addition, we wanted to gather suggestions on areas where technology, money, or trends in librarianship could be explored to improve the daily operations of the library.

There were a total of seven focus groups based on department: 1) the Reference Collections and Instruction librarians and staff ; 2) Branch library staff; 3) University Archives and Special Collections; 4) Technical Services and Digital Production Unit; 5) Instruction and User Services staff 6) Emerging Technology; 7) Library Administration and Management (LAMP) .

We looked at the participants' answers and assigned categories or "themes" to them to see if patterns or commonalities emerged. We organized the over thirty themes into broader categories of Collections; Communication; Facilities; Management, Technology, User Services, Values and Workflow. In the full report, we describe the themes in the context of each question. The questions we asked were designed to solicit responses to specific areas, such as customer service. Therefore the themes that emerged are most relevant to the questions asked, but we saw repeated themes in response to multiple questions.

Suggestions for further investigation

A number of issues emerged from the focus groups that could be addressed by department heads, RIS, or other groups or units. These issues ranged from simple equipment needs to workflow improvements to more complex research questions around trends and services. We have broken them down into these categories: Equipment; Services; Technology and Software; Trends and Workflow. Within each category there are three time frames: short-term, for those things that are easiest to address without much additional research or money; medium-term, for things that require more money or investigation; and long-term, for more complex ideas that will require research, time and investment of resources to address.

Equipment

Short-term

- Circulation needs a phone that can easily transfer calls and show phone numbers of callers. This would enable them to better serve patrons and to streamline communication between public service desks.
- USB mice to check out with public laptops
- Wireless mice for Technical Services staff

Medium-term

- To address limitations and workflow issues with current e-scanning equipment, OSUL could acquire e-scanners with additional functionality, such as sending larger files, or the ability to save files to USB drives or ONID space. E-scanners would be used on every floor Computers with scanners attached would also work.

- Technical Services would like to be able to project from one computer in the technical services meeting room.

Long-term

- Vocera or other mobile communications device.

Services

Medium-term

- Look at the complaints we get as a source of information to improve services
- Training for staff on the highest level of customer service; address how patrons are changing and have a more consistent approach for how we first interact with people.
- Instruction; patrons need instruction on an ongoing basis to keep up with the changes and to address new users who have more of a Google mindset toward research.
- Paging materials from the shelves for patrons.
- Desktop delivery, campus delivery.

Technology and Software

Short-term

- Working link resolver (in the works).

Long-term

- Improve wireless connectivity in the building.

Trends

Medium term

- Handheld/mobile devices –begin by investigating how users can interact with the library web pages on their mobile devices.
- Streaming video and podcasts
- Web 2.0 and social networking tools to create communities of interest.
- Look at what’s going on in elementary & high school to see what students of the future will be like.

Workflow

Medium-term

- Improve signage and how patrons find their way in the library. People are forever confused about the 2nd floor/ 1st floor distinction. Having a sign for the coffee shop would be nice, too (a large coffee cup?)
- Maybe you could do a research project on how library search committees work and the hiring process to see if there are ways to expedite it?

Long-term

- Address workflow issues in ScholarsArchive
- Improve and speed up search process for users.

Full Report

Introduction

Research and Innovative Services (RIS) conducted focus groups with the OSU Libraries faculty and staff to promote the mission of the department and to identify potential research areas. The RIS mission is to benefit OSU Libraries by tracking trends, conducting research, preparing feasibility studies and running pilot projects for innovative services, programs or products. This focus group project serves certain aspects of the mission by providing a baseline of qualitative information to direct some of our future investigations.

Objectives for the focus groups

OSU Libraries staff have a wealth of experience and information from their daily work. We saw the focus groups as a way to elicit input and tap the reservoir of ideas from people across the library. In addition, we wanted to gather suggestions on areas where technology, money or trends in librarianship could be explored to improve the daily operations of the library. In this report we present this valuable data so that it can be interpreted and used for decision-making as well as for the basis of future investigations.

Participants

We solicited participation from every department in the OSU Libraries. Over the course of six weeks in September – October 2008, we held a total of seven focus groups based on department: 1) the Reference Collections and Instruction librarians and staff; 2) Branch library staff; 3) University Archives and Special Collections; 4) Technical Services and Digital Production Unit; 5) Instruction and User Services staff; 6) Emerging Technology; 7) Library Administration and Management (LAMP).

Preparation

The authors briefly investigated best practices for conducting focus groups. Two of the most helpful reports we consulted were “Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews,”¹ and “Focus Group Fundamentals.”² We developed five focus group questions and RIS members helped us to refine them. The questions were later modified to make them conversational rather than formal in order to facilitate good conversation. The questions were sent to the participants before the session.

Procedures

Focus groups were scheduled for one hour each. Two RIS members facilitated each session and one additional member took notes on a laptop. Participants were welcomed to the focus group

¹ Iowa State University Extension. (May, 2004). “Focus Group Fundamentals.” PM 1969b.

² Krueger, Richard A. (October 2002). “Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews.”

and cookies and hot beverages were provided to most groups. The mission of the department was presented and ground rules and procedures were explained. Then the facilitators asked the questions prepared for the focus group and carried on the discussion in a conversational manner. We allocated a specific amount of time for each question, but allowed additional time on questions that sparked productive conversation. Afterwards, the facilitators met to reflect on how the session went and assigned themes to the participants' answers. Each of the sessions followed this pattern. The script we used for each focus group is attached in Appendix 1.

Analysis

Overview

One valuable aspect of using a focus group methodology is the ability to gather input from many different functional groups within the library to gain a broader perspective of the whole organization. After assigning preliminary themes to the focus group results, we built tables to organize the themes. We then constructed bar graphs to show the major themes for each question from each group. The bar graphs for each question show that some themes are more important to certain groups. Some themes have more responses than others and we concluded that those are the major themes for each question asked. Not surprisingly, the type of daily work conducted within library departments influenced the issues and themes that emerged from their respective focus groups. Public services staff focused on things that would help them enhance the library patron's experience. Technical Services staff highlighted workflow and technology issues. Archives and Special Collections brought up topics related to digital content such as preservation, curation and finding ways to increase the use of digital collections. Staff in the branches stressed the importance of discovery tools, delivery systems and communication between library locations. Library administration was focused on trends and the big picture. Having all seven groups respond to our questions produced a comprehensive picture of issues important throughout the library.

Themes

Our content analysis of the focus group responses generated over thirty themes that we later condensed into broader thematic areas. In addition, we noted responses connoting either a barrier or a positive impact. The broader themes are not exclusive; there is obvious overlap between many of the categories and we assigned multiple themes to many of the responses from the focus groups.

Discussion

In this section we present the questions and responses according to the prevalent themes for each question.

Question 1 ~ Good User Services

What do you think are good customer services we have for our users? What makes them good? Do you enjoy doing them?

We started with a question that we hoped would give us information about what OSUL is doing well already and to “prime the pump” for the later questions where we ask about how the library might improve services. Using the term “customer services” was confusing to at least one group, but we meant it in a generic manner to include all the things we do to serve users.

Major themes that emerged from Q1 are: Creating User-Centered Services, Resources, Technology, Digital Content, Partnership and Instruction

Creating User Centered Services

User-centered services are a central focus of the library. Public services gave the most responses in this category, and often focused on delivering content to users. Broadly speaking, we learned that staff think OSU Libraries is doing a very good job of “getting people what they need when they need it in whatever form they need.” Services such as Summit and ILL are highly prized by users and help them do their research and teaching. IUS staff noted how they support distance patrons by delivering materials and how there is now a pilot project to offer distance delivery for patrons who self-select as a distant users. A service OSUL is not currently offering is the idea of developing a system to proactively deliver content to campus researchers.

Branch staff noted that “our delivery services are really good and have raised user expectations; we are now starting to meet the goal of information anytime, anywhere.” Guin staff love the RAPID service and find that it meets and has raised user expectations for efficient delivery of articles. Because Guin is in the ILL workflow, library staff has the adaptability to fix requests that are not quite right and to rescan bound journals to get better quality thereby improving the delivery of content to users.

Several groups mentioned that they have had positive feedback from students using Our Little Village Day Care, which we categorized as both a user-centered service and a partnership.

Technology

Emerging Technology and IUS had the most responses for this question that we coded under the Technology theme. For the most part, technology resources are regarded positively by these two groups, but they see room for improvement. It’s a plus that the Internet and computing resources we offer in the OSU Libraries enable students to come into the building to do their work without having to leave the library. The new location of the Computer Help Desk and the Student Multimedia Services on the main floor of the Valley Library enables students get help with these areas efficiently.

In addition, staff see things like the Oregon Explorer and the Interactive Course Assignment pages as “tremendous new tools” to use to help students, faculty and Oregonians. There are a lot of internal network services that help library staff do their daily work. Special Collections staff deal with a lot of email and requests for materials and the staff is thankful to have all the tools needed to respond.

Digital Content

People enjoy having digital access to journals and information and in the view of the more digitization, the better. Digitization on demand is a great service and its immediacy is prized by

remote users. It also gives the world access to OSU research and may eventually save money on FedEx and ILL. Subject expertise is an important aspect of providing access to the collections. A number of people noted the importance of “having expert people in the right places to answer questions.”

Resources

All the groups noted that library facilities have a positive impact on staff and users. All four library facilities are clean, comfortable and help users do their work. We generally have good, up-to-date equipment. The fact that the Valley Library has computers, laptops and printers drives a lot of traffic to the building. Laptops are “forever popular” and headphones are also well-used.

Public services staff in IUS had a lot to say about the demand for e-scanning. In a nutshell, they think e-scanning is a great idea that users want more of it. One participant asked “As we move away from print collections, isn’t it kind of odd to encourage people to use paper to photocopy? Why not set up more e-scanning and on every floor?” Limitations of the current e-scanners can leave users frustrated. Because of the demand for the e-scanners, patrons often have wait in line to scan and send, and then sometimes have to re-scan and re-send documents because the file size exceeded the limit allowed by the e-scanner. It would be fruitful to investigate ways to streamline the e-scanning workflow and improve user experiences with the e-scanners. One example of an improvement would be e-scanners that allow download to USB drives or ONID network space.

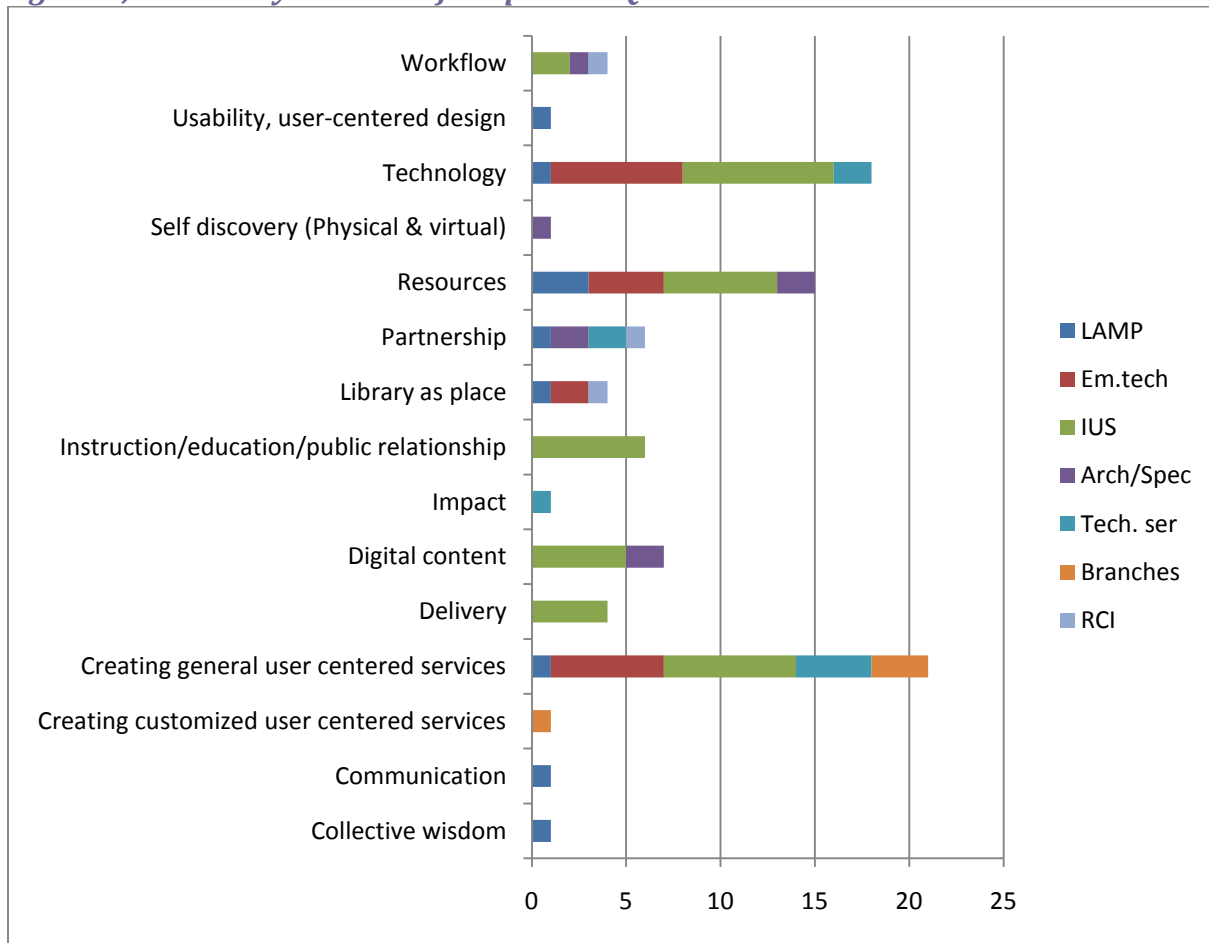
Instruction

We defined instruction as any interaction where library staff teaches users something about the library – anything from one-to-one encounters to large library instruction sessions within courses. Public Services staff value the one-on-one interactions they have with library users, especially in the branches, Archives and Special Collections. Chat works well to meet the needs of students, especially younger students. Library instruction, workshops and other training are also seen as important services we have for users. While Guin staff members are comfortable with the one-on-one instruction they do daily with library users, they were also keen on increasing the options for instruction in their branch. Guin sees “such a range of skills from community college to faculty” there are always people who need to learn basic library skills and Guin could use more of this type of instruction.

Partnerships

Several groups noted the importance of partnerships for providing library services that fit our community’s needs. The RCI group thinks that finding partnerships helps expand library services, for example without outside partnerships, the library would not be able to provide such services as the CLC and Our Little Village Day Care.

Figure 1, Themes by Number of Responses: Q1



Question 2 ~ What do library users tell you?

What do you hear from library users about the library? How does it make you feel?

The most prevalent themes from Question 2 were: Instruction; Employee Morale and Communication; Library as Place; Technology; and User Expectations

Instruction

Public services staff told us that students like the course pages, and that they appreciate being able to get help via the librarian chat. One public services person was concerned that upper-level students are not aware of what subscription databases the library provides –“either the student hasn’t made an effort or we are not presenting that information well.”

Employee Morale

Because we asked people how they felt about what library patrons told them about the library, it makes sense that one of our major themes for this question is “employee morale.” This includes both positive and negative aspects of morale.

Many participants in the focus groups feel that they don't get to see the results of their work – that they don't hear back much from users about what works. So, while they feel proud of their work and the experience they have accumulated, they would like to see “evidence of the importance of their work.” This is especially true of Technical Services. Other groups find that the only feedback they have from users is negative; this is true of the building managers, and of Emerging Technology. IUS sometimes hears that the “collection is bad” which “makes them feel grim.”

Users don't understand the policies and procedures of the library, and as “library policies are not clearly printed anywhere,” IUS staff find themselves having to “spout policy,” making it hard to communicate with some people.

On the flip side, IUS notes that users tell them that they “could not do their research without the library (especially ILL and Summit). Reserves are also appreciated by users. Public services staff across the library that they hear

Communication

Communication breaks out into internal communication and the communication library staff have with users. Because of their number of interactions with users IUS had the most comments about communicating with users and offered some ideas on how to improve that communication. These are covered in the responses to question 3.

Library as Place

Every focus group noted in response to both questions 1 and 2 that the library building is appreciated by users for its beauty, convenience and services. For question 2, “library as place” goes beyond the beauty of the building and gets into how users operate within the building. From Emerging Technology's point of view “library as place” means access to computers, printers and the wireless network. The new Macintosh computers have been a hit and are always in use. Emerging Technology also hears a lot of complaints, especially about the quality of wireless access, particularly on the first floor, but also about lost files and even about restroom maintenance (the 2nd floor restrooms would often benefit from extra cleaning).

Technology

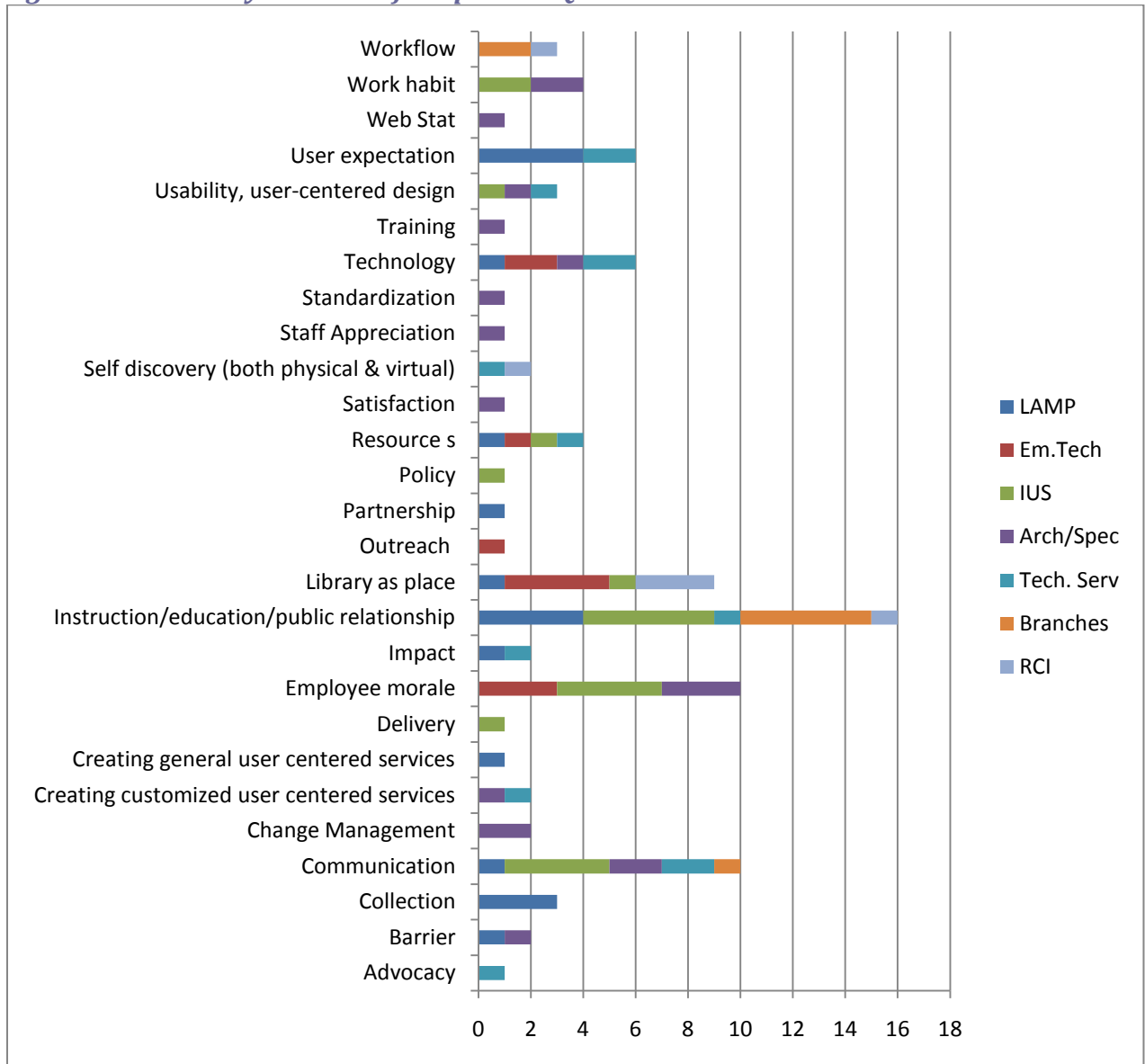
Emerging Technology fields a lot of questions about how the systems work, for example, someone wanted to know how the Linux thin clients were set up.

User Expectations

User expectations are both too high and too low. Users expectations of our online services and tools we promote are high – their benchmark is Google and they don't have the inside knowledge to know why our electronic tools don't perform to that standard. Cascades users don't understand why it's so hard to get things... this is frustrating to library staff because it shouldn't be so hard. On the other hand “people are amazed at how helpful we are,” and library employees often exceed user expectations for service.

Sometimes users are put off by things that could work more seamlessly, for example, the waits for off-site storage materials, and the check-out periods for bound journals. Also, public services can sometimes bounce people from service desk to service desk.

Figure 2. Themes by Number of Responses: Q2



Question 3 ~ What kinds of services/trends would help?

From your experiences, what kinds of services or trends do you think would help our students, faculty, staff and the community use OSU Libraries even better?1

Instruction

The branches see a need for ongoing education on using the library; they currently take advantage of the “teachable moment” but because things change, it would be great to have other ways to push out instruction to users. Also, there is instructional expertise that exists at Valley that could be shared with the branches; one example is EndNote - how to offer instruction and let users know about the point person.

Cascades wonders if we are fully exploiting Blackboard. Can we do something differently despite the software’s limitations? For example, should we automatically populate departmental or faculty pages with ICA pages and Subject Guides? Technical services commented that educating incoming freshman about how to use the library seems like a good thing to do.

Workflow

Workflow issues affect both library patrons and staff. Cascades experiences significant delays in delivery at times. Simplifying printing at the Valley Library would streamline the workflows for both patrons and staff. As mandates for depositing published work in institutional repositories are put in place, faculty would benefit from an easier submission process to Scholar’s Archive.

Technology

Every group called out the importance of wireless access and of expanding the scope of wireless access to include community users and alumni. Community users would also like access to more e-mail computers. While it is not only a technological issue, alumni would also like remote access to online OSU Libraries resources.

Handheld devices and mobile phones were recognized by public services, emerging technology and LAMP as an extremely important and timely delivery mechanism to use. Some examples would be sending call numbers from the library catalog to a mobile device, building a catalog application that would work with iphones or other GPS-enabled devices and that could “walk you up to your book.”

Chat is terrific as a tool for both external communication with library patrons and internal communication with staff. However, the circulation computers tend to lose their IM connections because of other applications they run, and staff may not be standing at the front desk at all times, so other technological means of communicating between desks might be good to investigate.

Library as Place

Several groups (RCI, IUS, TS) talked about the need for clearer signage in the library, especially for the 1st and 2nd floors. Having journals in 4 places is a real problem and patrons are confused about how to move between compact shelving, regular shelving, current issues, and online issues. IUS staff says that everyone looks “and confused when they come in --- as if they are wondering--where is the stuff?” IUS sees a need to address the fact that the building is not

intuitive. Beyond the security gates there is not a clear place for the user to start. Emerging Technology wonders if the foyer area inside the security gates would be a good place for a small information desk. 2 groups noted that there are no signs for Java II – how do you get there, and how do you get there from the 1st floor? IUS asks “what about a sign in the foyer for Java II --- perhaps a large coffee cup?” Another way to help users find their way would be to update the online Library Tour. Emerging Technology wondered if bringing back something like the docent program would help, as well.

IUS says that students are always looking for space; it’s valuable. They wonder if the current journal areas could be repurposed as study space. LAMP also mused about what changes could still happen to the reference area and how we will let users use library spaces as we become more electronic. IUS reiterated that collaborative spaces are popular... which is why laptops are so valuable and people need moveable learning setups.

Technical Services also commented that the students would like more study spaces and that the collaborative learning center is a good trend. Guin experimented with collaborative learning; had a quiet side and a collaborative side to give students space to work together; it was only a challenge when one person wants quiet space. At Valley, public services staff and LAMP pointed out that people want library open 24hrs all term especially dead and final week and that opening seminar rooms and classrooms during dead and final weeks is great.

A comment from RCI was that the library should be more like bookstores that it should be easier to find materials, images of book jackets in the catalog, book jackets on books, the ability to put books on hold even if they are on the shelf, the ability to browse popular and media collections.

Resources

IUS sees the need for equipment to help them give better service to users. E-scanners were mentioned yet again. Laptops were also mentioned again; in the context that one barrier about them is that they don’t always work. Users also want to check out USB mice for the laptops. IUS, Emerging Technology and LAMP mentioned the need for self-check machines that would cut down on the lines that form at circulation. Self-check-in would be great for time-sensitive items like reserves or room keys. Emerging Tech thought it might be a better workflow if laptop check-in and check-out were handled separately from other circulation transactions.

Emerging Technology noted that more money and capacity for Oregon Explorer would help new development such as mobile applications for OE.

Usability

We need to continue to remember to “move away from library jargon,” to help users who are new to library procedures and policies.

Cascades notes that they faced a usability problem when instructors could not get into OSUL databases in classrooms at Cascades because of an EZproxy issue, the fact that Cascades classrooms were on a different IP range caused this.

A member of LAMP related a story about how talking directly to users really changed how John Deere’s engineers operated --- the lesson for us is that listening to users is critical.

Creating user-centered services

Different segments of the Libraries user community have different needs for tailored services. For example, community users want to be able to check out bound journals. Is there some way to create new user segments, for example a “researcher” account that would have rights to check out bound journals? Simple user-centered services would be things like paging from the shelves for patrons to pick up in the library or have delivered to their office or home. A LAMP member advocated for “desktop delivery of everything; including books; users want books paged & delivered to their desk.

Another way to create more responsive user services is to more frequently assess the borrowing periods for books, journals and other materials; the example IUS staff used was the one-week checkout period. Does it really serve our users’ needs? Purchase on demand is another example of creating services that more closely meet the needs of users.

One user-centered service Technical Services staff recommended developing is a tool to help users communicate access problems with databases. Right now, they don’t know where to go; E-resources needs specific information to troubleshoot database problems that doesn’t always get communicated to them. Also, they often want to contact the patron when the database issue is resolved. It may be useful to develop a help form specifically designed for reporting e-resources problems. Perhaps it could be accessed by clicking a help button on the bottom of the web page.

Some other suggestions for building user centered services came from LAMP

- Provide services that go beyond delivery; provide services to help faculty/students with what they do with material example: Zotero
- Work on seamless discovery to delivery mechanism
- Give faculty pages like ICA’s -- as we change systems their stuff gets lost

Self-Discovery

Respondents described several ways that OSUL could enhance self-discovery by streamlining the processes patrons use. RCI librarians and staff thought that using a catalog like WorldCat Local would give users a one-stop entry for borrowing. Users need tools to “help them understand what they are getting when they drop in from Google and to understand what to do next.

Public Services, Technical Services and LAMP all wished for a way to “standardize how we access e-journals” and to have a “more seamless pathway from data to journal article.” A better link resolver would help users “go straight to article: the ideal would be 1-click from discovery to delivery.”

Other ways to support self-discovery are to make fiction easier to find, to figure out how to make the media collection browse-able and to help users take the RSS feeds from the journals they like best. To sum up, OSUL should develop “whatever tools that allow our researchers as independent as possible because that is what they want.”

Digital Content

People want more digital content – more e-books, online textbooks and additional electronic collections that faculty would like to have. Digitization on demand is in place and there is a good infrastructure in place to do this.

Communication

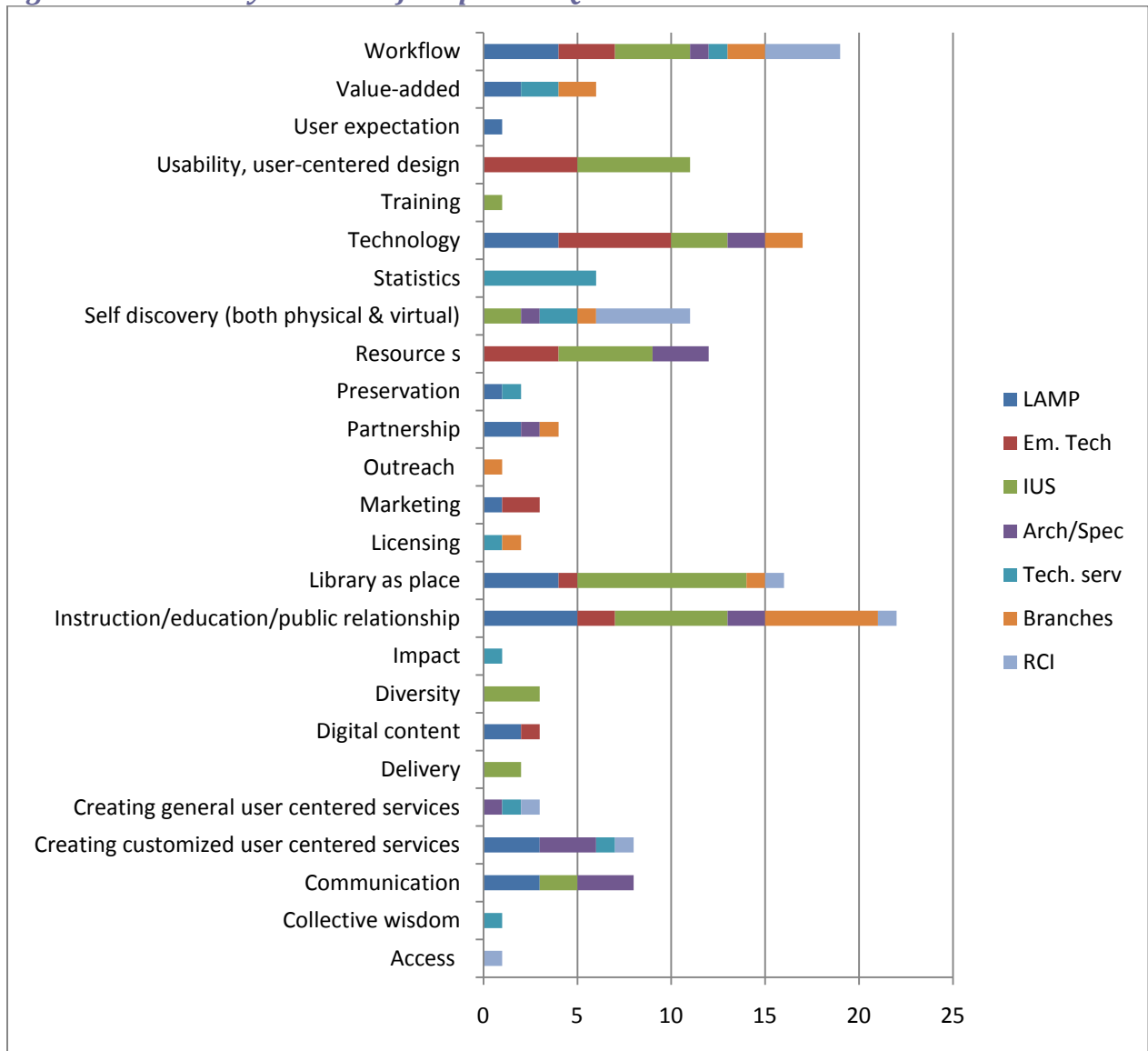
IUS noted that some of our external communications to community members are not accurate and that we need to get the proper information out to the community, e.g., how to get a library card at OSUL. Emerging Technologies has heard the students who do the OSU tours pass on a degree of misinformation about the library. Technical Services wondered how the library can let users know about the variety and depth of our resources.

Better internal communication could also increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the libraries. Several people noted that cross-training between the public services desks would help alleviate some of the communication issues that affect both employees and users.

Trends

- **E-content** -- how will getting more e-books affect Summit lending? Should we pursue more electronic article lending?
- **Intellectual property**; library needs to have a core group with an understanding of intellectual property issues such as DCMA, Digital Rights Management and Creative Commons licensing.
- **Add tools to create communities of interest**; example, if have a railroad collection then build the capability to have an online community for those with interests in that area. Use Web 2.0 & social networking applications to create this capability.
- **Add value to online collections**. One example is the Flickr Commons project where the general public can add information to photos from several Library of Congress digital photo collections. In some cases, information is added that was not known by the staff at LOC. The more there are digital collections and digital libraries the more contexts around these collections will add value; developing curriculum around the collections; services that go with that.
- **Develop services around video and other multimedia**. CMC is building an interface so students/faculty can submit content to a YouTube-like collection of videos. OSUL weak in streaming video and audio; do we need a streaming server? The university is generally weak in this area. What is the tipping point? Where it is more cost effective for the library to do this? Does the library need to develop capacity to do this? Teach students how to do podcasting - right now there is no central location for students to learn this. Should library do this or create partnerships?
- **Communication tools**. Continue to develop tools that students already use to communicate -- MySpace, IM, Text messaging. As there is more demand on users' time, how do we capture their attention; fewer come in just to use library come in for space; see more people doing multiple things simultaneously. Do we push information out to them, make it easy to subscribe to a new books list or create a feed of searches or table of contents? One idea was to track the most frequent users of particular databases and use text messaging to tell them when a database is way for them to report.
- **Data curation & preservation**; how should OSUL and the campus address the need to comply with or exceed standards set out by agencies such as NSF?
- **Scholarly Communication issues**: Help graduate students and faculty understand publishing rights in the digital environment. Help faculty with P&T process, by helping them use tools such as the Web of Science, JCR & Eigen factor and discussing how to document new types of scholarship for Promotion and Tenure. OSU Press is working to change publishing models for monographs; we may have a role in making their works available electronically.

Figure 3. Themes by Number of Responses: Q3



Question 4 ~ What would make your job easier?

If it was perfect world and we could get anything we want in the library, what is your wish list? For example, are there things you can think of that would make your job easier or more effective?

Major themes that Q4 generated were: Resources, Workflow, Technology and Communication

Resources

Every group identified places where human or financial resources would improve their work. Archives and Special Collections foresee a need for financial resources to address several issues around collections:

- 1) the impending need for off-site storage that includes considerations for housing specialized collections. LAMP also called out the need for “state of the art off-site storage” for both physical and digital collections.
- 2) a forthcoming need for a separate dark repository for electronic records. This will become more important as NSF begins to require researchers to archive data.
- 3) additional money for housing collections.
- 4) large format scanner or the funds to outsource to address this need.

Technical services would like resources for equipment. Wireless mice and small printers on each desk would help them process items in a more efficient way. They would also like to upgrade the technical services meeting room to include a way to project from one computer so that five people could see the same screen. In addition, they see the need for more money to bind.

LAMP wishes to have an index fund for materials that keeps pace with inflation. On LAMP’s wish list for resources for equipment are the following: self-check devices, scanners that work (having problems with the big scanner in ILL), better and faster copiers and color copiers, a library-dedicated plotter printer, and electronic bulletin boards listing staff, news and events.

Human resources were also important on focus group wish lists. Archives would also like more money for training and professional development. Special collections would like to be able to do targeted hiring, for example: technical support for 3 months for a specific project. IUS sees a need for ‘being re-trained on the highest level of customer service,’ and to understand more about patrons are changing. They also see a need for more staff to ease everyone’s workload, which would also give staff enough time to keep up with things that need updating, like policy pages and documenting procedures as they change. Public services would like to see more IT staff to train and assist staff and for those IT staff members to have “a teaching and service mentality.” Emerging technology sees a need for more staffing in their department, especially on the system administration end. They also are concerned about salaries, as they feel these are not commensurate with other similar positions across campus. LAMP would like more faculty for instruction, a development officer devoted solely to the library, additional personnel to work with photocopying and a programmer for every department until the perfect world arrives.

Communication

Public services staff (IUS, RCI) would like to improve communication within and between the public services desks. At times they feel “we’re segmented in our areas” and that it would help to

get to know employees in other departments better. IUS notes that it is important for public services staff to “realize the limitations of each desk.” For example, circulation staff are generally not free to leave the circulation desk. To help communication between desks, and to streamline workflows, the library could design a form that shows what reference or circulation has done, and send that form with the patron to the appropriate desk. This would be good for non-native speakers. In addition to the library services brochure translated into other languages, it would be nice to have the library policies translated. Someone mentioned that having an electronic in and out board would be helpful to communicate absences and availability. One respondent noted that they would love to see less e-mail.

Guin and Cascades would like there to be more communication between Valley and the branches. Polycom cannot fully replace face-to-face meetings or other interpersonal interactions, and branch staff consistently feel a bit out of the regular flow of communication. Issues that make it to LAMP are well-communicated to the branches, but not all of what’s happening makes it to LAMP. Some things that happen at Valley are not well-communicated to the branches. Cascades would love a teleporter; in the absence of that futuristic device, it would be good to find additional or improved ways to connect the branches with the central library.

Technical Services appreciates the meeting notes from the administrative briefing, as several employees work shifts where they are not in the library on Fridays.

LAMP sees a need for better communication and liaison with several campus units: the copyright office; the Research Office; and Human Resources.

Workflow

A number of responses about making jobs easier fell into the category of workflow. This was true especially for IUS, Technical Services and Archives/Special Collections. It’s important to make a distinction here between library users’ workflow and the internal workflows of library staff. For example, IUS was primarily concerned with improving the library users’ workflow to aid people as they work through the processes of discovery and delivery of library materials. We’ve already touched on the need IUS sees for improvements in the operations of photocopying and e-scanning, as well as requests for finding new ways to deliver content to users such as paging from the shelves, desktop delivery of articles that are within the collection, and campus delivery of non-electronic items.

Technical Services has another view of workflow: that of the internal library staff member who is working with computer systems and processes that are clunky, repetitive and not as streamlined as possible. ScholarsArchive is the main example of a workflow process that could be improved; as it currently stands there are many steps in creating SA records and some of them are not in the most efficient order. Technical services has the most concern about workflow. They do not want to lose capabilities they have already as the library moves to new systems and catalogs. For example, they don’t want to have to give up the ability to create lists as they can now with III. On the other hand, they would like new systems to add functionality and to have some time to work through some of the bugs before implementation of new systems. An example of the added functionality they would like to see from a new ILS is the ability to write real

macros; in Millennium they have to rely on text strings. Technical Services staff would like there to be fewer places to have to update metadata, and fewer details to remember.

Technology

Most of the technology issues on our staff wish lists also fall under the category of “resources,” as technology equipment and services always cost something.

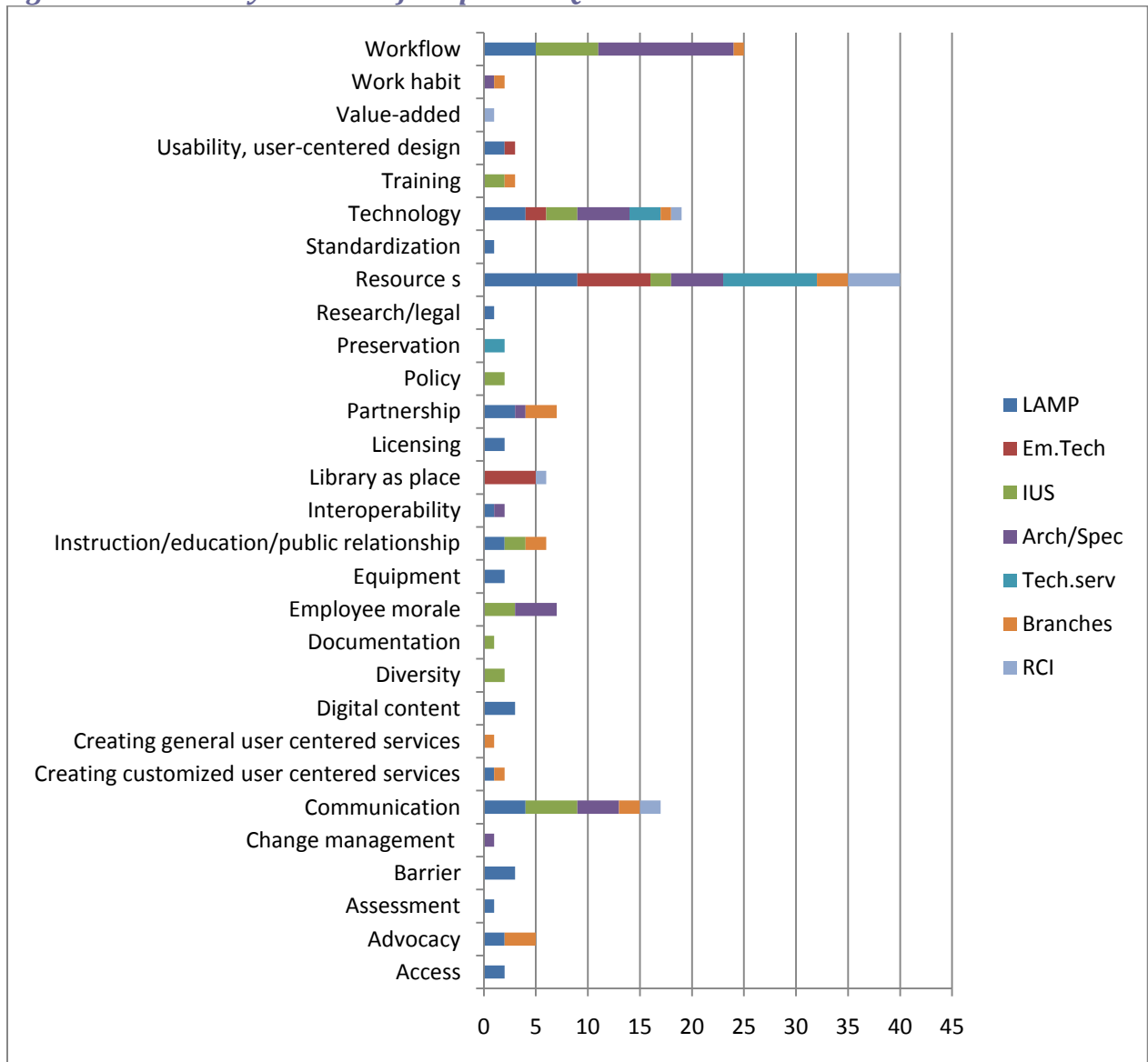
Technical services pointed out that the wireless connectivity is not ideal throughout their workspace and both public services and emerging technology agree that the wireless connectivity in the building is not ideal.

On the software side, public services staff from RCI and the branches would love to see a “truly seamless link resolver,” and seamless deliver “patrons don’t worry about how something is delivered, they just want what they want” RCI is also looking for tools that add value to the search process such as help in identifying scholarly articles, how to cite things, and how to find more articles like the one you are viewing.

On the equipment side, Guin Library appreciates the new Macs in the branch. More computers would be used if offered – a good number of public users come to the branch to use the computers. RCI reiterated the need for more e-scanning machines in ILL & self service areas, as well as the demand for more group study rooms with media-playing capabilities. IUS would like to see better approach to the security gate, which is a technology issue, a workflow issue, a public relations/communication issue and a user-expectation issue. Emerging technology wanted i-phones on their wish list. They also thought that an expanded information commons would be used, and that more group work spaces would be popular, for example with a central computer that several people could use (mentioned that WOU used something of a “pod”: approach to do this, and that other places have used booths). More capacity for computers would serve students – what about computers on other floors? They also noted that while the new Computer Help Desk is great, that the red and flashing sign is a distraction and something about the configuration looks a bit unfriendly.

From the LAMP focus group, Jeremy thought that it would be cool to have a librarian dashboard where we could see current live usage statistics and other information that would help librarians make good assessments of collections in real time. Finally, IUS would appreciate “technology that always works,” but we’ll have to put that on the same wish list as Cascades’ desire for a teleporter.

Figure 4. Themes by Number of Responses: Q4



Question 5 ~ Advice for RIS?

Do you have any advice for us as we investigate new services?

We did not analyze question 5 for themes, as the question was designed to elicit research ideas and advice for RIS.

Participants were pleased to learn more about the RIS department and they appreciated the opportunity to share their input and concerns. Several groups encouraged us to communicate regularly throughout the libraries. We were advised to “communicate generally with library faculty, pushing information out on a regular basis.” People were interested in getting progress reports and seeing the final reports whether or not OSUL used the information from a particular

report to implement a new service. There was interest in us communicating the failures as well as the successes.

Many people encouraged us to “talk to as many users as possible” with the aim of finding out more about their information needs so that the library can build services around those needs. One recommendation was to do something like the cost recovery survey, but more library-focused. Participants also noted that we in the libraries are not adept at selling the library. Public services staff noted that there seems to be a trend of students coming who seem not to value or understand the library and who may have unrealistic expectations about the library. Clear communication about what the library can and cannot do as well as appropriate instruction would help to address unrealistic expectations.

“We need to be pushing out and helping people understand what’s going on here. They have no idea and when they have no idea, we have no money.”

RIS research projects should include those in the library with expertise on the issues that are studied. Projects that RIS takes on should be considered to belong to the library as a whole. RIS should involve those whose expertise or research area would benefit particular projects. We were also encouraged to involve other departments (Technical Services, Emerging Technologies) as early as possible in the research process. Including staff from across the library in the research project teams, or encouraging research projects outside of RIS would also help to give

“Crawl, Walk, Run – start slow, do it right, then take off.”

employees opportunities to advance their skills. Another area of involvement is to look at how we collaborate with other institutions; several people noted how important our relationships with our partner institutions will be as we go forward. Finally, there were several pieces of pithy advice: “Appreciate all the staff ... take a cataloger to lunch!” (this from public services staff). “Use popular items as a gateway drug for the library.” In other words, popular books, movies, games, and the like could draw users in to see what else was in the

library. We especially liked the advice to “Crawl, Walk, Run... start slow, do it right and then take off.” Organizational change takes time, and we want to lay the best groundwork we can as we develop the RIS department.

Conclusion

The library and the RIS department benefited from this research project in several ways. First, library employees were very engaged and thoughtful in their participation, and participants told us they were pleased to take part in these conversations. Second, we gained insight into the kinds of issues facing each department in the library. We gathered information that can lead to RIS projects or investigation or action by other departments. Finally, we learned more about using focus groups as a research methodology and gained practical experience in facilitation and analysis. We have identified software and training for a qualitative research analysis.

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Appendix A ~ Focus Group Questions

Ground Rules for the focus group session

- Be respectful of others in the group and let everyone have a chance to express opinions.
- Let one person at a time speak, and listen to each others' ideas.
- Be respectful of staff that are not present, and of the work everyone does in the library.

Focus Group Questions

1. What do you think are good customer services we have for our users? What makes them good? Do you enjoy doing them?
2. What do you hear from library users about the library? How does it make you feel?
3. From your experiences, what kinds of services or trends do you think would help our students, faculty, staff and the community use OSU Libraries even better?
4. If it was a perfect world and we could get anything we want in the library, what is your wish list? For example, are there things you can think of that would make your job easier or more effective?
5. Do you have any advice for us as we investigate new services?

Appendix B ~ Focus Group Notes

The entire transcript of the focus groups responses is available by requesting it from RIS.